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A description of the modular scheduling practices in the foreign language programs of the White Bear Lake, Minnesota secondary schools includes information on its general design, advantages, and problems. Following discussions of arrangements for scheduling, student-teacher contact time, classroom activities, more individualized instruction, scheduled and unscheduled laboratory time, and instructional aids, there are brief guidelines to be followed in deciding on a schedule. (AF)

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MODULAR SCHEDULING AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Address by Allen Hibbard, Co-ordinator of Foreign Languages, Public Schools of White Bear Lake, Minnesota at FLAND Spring Conference, Dickinson, North Dakota, April 19, 1969.

Why should we as foreign language teachers be interested in modular-flexible scheduling? There are two obvious reasons: How can it be used to improve our language program? and How can it help us to better carry out the objectives of our language program?

The objectives of a foreign language program under any scheduling system remain the same. These objectives are to develop in the individual student the ability to comprehend, to speak, to read, and to write the target language. Modular flexible scheduling provides opportunity to better carry out these objectives. The schedule is but a tool to make implementation of the program easier. Last fall in a conversation with one of our junior high principals about a suggested language schedule, his response was - "Gee, do you think that's innovative enough?" It is nice to have a principal ask you such a question and maybe that is progress in itself. But we are not innovating to be innovating, we are innovating to see if we can create, for the individual student, a better climate for language learning.

Modular-flexible scheduling, in effect then, gives you the teacher the opportunity to determine the schedule you feel most apropos to the language learning needs of the students of your school.

The major problems connected with the introduction of flexible scheduling to the foreign language curriculum are:

a. Traditionally a large portion of language learning requires direct interaction between pupil and teacher and the possibility of confirming and reinforcing correct responses made by the pupil--- in other words control over the individual response.
b. Present systems of materials are lock-step in nature and make it quite difficult to individualize instruction.
c. Scheduling difficulties arise if priorities are poorly established - because those students electing to study a foreign language tend to be heavily scheduled.
d. It is difficult to create a performance curriculum with specific behavioral objectives.
e. No systematic analysis of the foreign language curriculum has been undertaken to determine what parts of the instructional program can be done by the pupil working alone, what parts need small group instruction, and what activities are such that the size of the group in which they are presented is not relevant.

The foreign language program at White Bear is probably one of the more traditional in the school because we have not solved the above before mentioned problems - but we do feel we are making some progress. We have 12 foreign language teachers, four in German, four in French, and four in Spanish and as of this fall we have instituted a six-year sequence of study in each language area. Next fall we will offer Japanese.

In the first year of language study we feel that there should be a maximum of teacher-student contact time because the teacher serves as a model of correct pronunciation and intonation, - as a corrector, because the student cannot always hear his own errors and - as a drillmaster whose task is to develop in the student the ability to respond naturally and correctly to an oral stimulus. Because of the need for this type of student-teacher inter-action, we have scheduled all first year students two twenty-minute mods, five days a week. Some would say that this is not modular scheduling, I say it is because as a tool the schedule is meeting the learning needs of the individual in this discipline.

In the second year of language study, we still feel that student-teacher interaction is important. For this reason we requested for this present year - one large group meeting and four laboratory sized group meetings a week. We felt and still feel

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that five days a week of exposure to language learning was and is important at this level. A large number of student schedule conflicts made our request impossible except in German II. The use of the large group in German II has not hindered learning progress and it has given the teacher more time to work with individuals and in class preparation.

In another year school growth and a growing-language-enrollment will be such that large group sessions can be used at the third and fourth year levels. At present the fourth year classes are meeting three days a week for three twenty minute mods. We like the longer class meetings at the fourth level because we are project orientated and our discussions on serious readings are more involved.

We feel that the large group presentation has a role in foreign language learning and can be used effectively at all levels - if scheduling difficulties can be avoided and if enrollment makes its use practical. Large group presentations can be held once a week or every tenth day in a ten-day cycle scheduling program and involve the following activities:

a. Introduction and background to problems of structure or aspects of culture
b. Exercises in choral response
   Pronunciation drills
   Dialogue drill
   Certain pattern drills
c. Testing
d. Presentations by guest speakers (unit on soccer, food, art bullfighting)
e. Films

The small group has a great contribution to make to language learning. In all course designs for the coming year it has been included, either built into the schedule or planned in the total time request. I am sure that all of you have desired a smaller sized meeting group to work with for good conversation practice, for dialogue adaptations, directed dialogue and other conversation build-up exercises.

Another problem facing us as language teachers in a modular scheduling program is how to provide for individualized instruction. We have historically used lock-step techniques which have created a feeling of dismay in many of both our better and slower students. It has been a cause for some of the attrition we suffer from year to year in foreign languages.

At White Bear, I am not satisfied that we are breaking the lock-step so typical of present language teaching. We are providing for greater variation within each step by giving the student the opportunity to do certain learning tasks at his own pace, but the student must still meet certain artifically set time deadlines instead of performance levels.

We try to individualize our instruction in three ways:

1. Use of company prepared drill tapes that accompany the textbook.
2. Use of tape programs prepared by us and
3. Use of reading devices prepared by us.

We have two thirty booth labs. We use one as a classroom adjunct for group or class drill. This study is monitored by the teacher. The other lab is used as an open or individual listening lab and it is part of the foreign language resource center.

We require first and second year students to study in the laboratory during their unscheduled time for two mods each week. Third and fourth year students must study in the lab one mod a week. During this unscheduled time the student is to study assigned drills published to accompany the textbook. The student may study the tape drills as long and as often as he wishes. After he has decided that he is ready, he takes a short oral-written response quiz based on those assigned drills. There are a couple sample scripts of some of our follow-up quizzes in the packets that you received.

We have a tape library containing the duplications of the textbook tapes and those we have made.

Each tape is color coded and labeled for ease of use by the student. As mentioned earlier, the second way we individualize is through the use of tape programs prepared by us at White Bear.

These are short narrations of varying degrees of difficulty. They are designed

to develop listening comprehension, to give practice in pronunciation, and to build-up vocabulary. Each is followed by a short oral-written response quiz. The student can listen to these narrations and to the quizzes as many times as he wishes.

We have also created programs to give added practice in reading. Each reading assigned has an accompanying quiz. The listening and reading devices have been and are being developed by native speaking assistants under the direction of our language teachers.

As part of our supportive staff we have a native speaker in each language area. They are not expensive and any administrator that really wants to give the language program a shot in the arm can afford one. I am talking about the Amity Aide program that was begun right at Eau Claire.

We also have a resource center equipped with books, records, games, magazines and newspapers, where students interested in foreign languages can come to study. We also have a secretary who does most of our typing and helps supervise the resource center.

Let me close by saying that modular scheduling poses no threat to foreign language study - but it does open a lot of doors. It can:

1. save teacher presentation time through use of the large group.
2. make possible library use of the lab throughout the school day.
3. provide opportunity for individualizing instruction.
4. give the teacher the needed supportive staff-secretary, native assistants, lab technician.
5. give you a resource center where you can create the atmosphere for the study of other cultures.
6. help to make you an educator in the fullest sense by involving you in the total planning of your program.

I feel there are three guidelines that must be followed in deciding upon a schedule.

1. Does it make it possible to better carry out the objectives of a modern language program?
2. Can the proposed schedule be handled by the computer - have you made too great a demand on the time of the total school schedule?
3. Does the complexity of the schedule restrict student enrollment?

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